

Documents on Diplomacy: Resources

Section VII: World War I Diplomatic Terms & Historical Events

Diplomatic & Other Terms

Ambassador The official representative from one country to another. An Ambassador is the highest ranking official assigned to live in a foreign country for an extended period of time. In the United States, an Ambassador is appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate. The title of Ambassador was first used in the United States in 1893. Prior to that, the highest ranking American diplomats were Ministers Plenipotentiary.

Arbitration The formal process of dispute settlement by referring the matter to mediator agreed to by the disagreeing parties.

Blockade An official action designed to prevent people or goods from moving from one place to another. A war measure that isolates some area of importance to the enemy.

Charge d'Affaires The member of a diplomatic mission who takes charge of an embassy or legation during the temporary absence of its head. The chargé may also be the diplomat who acts as head of a country's lowest-level diplomatic mission that is neither an embassy nor a legation.

Commission A group of representatives or diplomats who are given authority to accomplish a specific task.

Concession An area of land in China leased to a foreign power by the Qing Dynasty during the late 19th and early 20th century.

Consul An official appointed by a government to protect its commercial interests and help its citizens in a foreign city.

Diplomacy The term is used to describe the practice of conducting relations with other nations, such as negotiating treaties, alliances, or agreements.

Diplomat An individual who is appointed by a government to represent its interests and to conduct its relations with another government. An Ambassador is the highest ranking U.S. Department of State diplomatic representative to another nation.

Diplomatic Corps Those engaged in on-going or specific official diplomatic efforts. Included are the Secretary of State, ambassadors, and special envoys to other nations and their staff members who support the work of diplomacy.

Diplomatic Mission An individual or group sent by a government to conduct negotiations or establish relations with another country. A diplomatic mission can be temporary or permanent.

Dispatches Official messages sent with speed between a government and its overseas diplomats or between nations.

Embassy The official headquarters of a government's Ambassador and other representatives to another country. It is usually located in the capitol of the other country. An Embassy is the highest level of diplomatic representation.

Envoy An agent sent by a government or ruler to transact diplomatic business.

Foreign Policy The official views and policies of a government regarding its relations with other nations. In the United States, foreign policy is developed by the President, with the advice of the Secretary of State and others, and is implemented by the Department of State and any other officials designated by the President.

Isolationism The policy of non-participation in contentious international matters. It was particularly associated with the United States during the 19th and early 20th centuries.

League An old term for an alliance.

Legation A diplomatic mission headed by a Minister whose title was "Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary." A legation is the second level of diplomatic representation and is less important than an embassy.

Military stores: Military supplies.

Minister Plenipotentiary A diplomat with the authority to represent a head of state but of a lower status than an Ambassador. Until 1893, diplomats who headed American missions overseas only carried the title of Minister Plenipotentiary. The complete title is "Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary."

Mobilize To organize a nation's civilian and military population in advance of war.

Negotiate The term refers to discussions between individuals, groups, or nations that are conducted for the purpose of arriving at an agreement on a particular set of terms or actions.

Neutrality A legal status assumed unilaterally by a state during a time of war, indicating its intention to stay out of the war.

Protocol The system of rules and acceptable behavior used at official ceremonies and occasions. This may also refer to an official international agreement.

Ratify A state's formal act of consent to be bound by a treaty which it has already signed. In the United States, the Senate ratifies treaties negotiated by the Executive Branch.

Rebellion An attempt to remove a government or a leader by force.

Refugees A person who leaves his or her country to find safety, especially during war or for political or religious reasons.

Revolt An attempt to remove the government of a country by its some of its citizens, using force.

Sovereignty The authority of a state to govern itself.

Statesman An experienced politician, who is respected for making good decisions.

Treaty A formal agreement between two or more countries or states, as in reference to terms of peace or trade and any limitations associated within the agreement.

Unrestricted Submarine Warfare A naval wartime practice that allows submarines to sink non-military ships, such as merchantmen and passenger liners, without warning.

Important Places, Concepts, and Events

Allies: The nations opposed to the Central Powers during World War I as the Triple Entente—the United Kingdom, France, and Russia. The United States fought as an “associated” power to avoid entangling alliances.

Assembly of the League of Nations: The main deliberative body of the League. It included representatives of all of its members and provided general policy direction.

Committee for Relief in Belgium: An international organization that arranged for the distribution of food in Belgium and Northern France during World War I. Future president Herbert Hoover served as its chairman.

Cossacks: Slovak peoples living in the Ukraine and Southern Russia. During the Russian revolution that formed the core of the “White” anti-Bolshevik resistance.

Council of the League of Nations: The executive body of the League of Nations, with four permanent members (Britain, France, Italy, and Japan) and four rotating members. The United States would have been its fifth permanent member.

Covenant of the League of Nations: The international agreement or treaty establishing the League of Nations.

The Fourteen Points: An idealistic speech given by President Woodrow Wilson to Congress on January 8, 1918. This speech became the basis for the negotiations at the Paris Peace Conference.

The Irreconcilables: A group of 12-18 Senators who fiercely opposed the Treaty of Versailles. Most of them were Republicans, but it also included German and Irish Democrats who felt the treaty favored the British. They were all bitter enemies of President Woodrow Wilson.

League of Nations: The first permanent international organization dedicated to maintaining world peace. It was founded as the result of the Paris Peace Conference that ended World War I.

Marxists: Followers of the world view of philosopher Karl Marx. Some of Marx’s political beliefs, especially his criticism of capitalism, were adopted by Bolshevik revolutionaries in Russia.

Paris Peace Conference: The official diplomatic negotiations that ended World War I and created the League of Nations. President Woodrow Wilson headed the U.S. delegation to the conference.

Reservation Senators: U.S. Senators who favored passage of the Treaty of Versailles without the reservations of Senator Henry Cabot Lodge. They joined the “Irreconcilables” to vote “no” on the treaty, later voting to approve the treaty without the reservations. The treaty failed by eight votes.

Roman Numerals: The numerical system of ancient Rome that used combinations of letters to represent value. Today, they are no longer used to count, but rather for formal purposes such as clock faces or tables of content.

Romanov: The ruling dynasty of Russia from 1613. The last Romanov, Nicholas II, was deposed in the Russian Revolution of 1917.

Russian Revolution: A series of revolutions from February to November 1917 that deposed the traditional government of the Tsar. It was replaced first with a Provisional Government, which, in turn, was replaced by a Bolshevik (Communist) government.

Treaty of Versailles: The agreement that ended the state of war between Germany and the Allied Powers during World War I. The United States Senate rejected the treaty in 1919 and did not formally end the war until the Senate passed the Knox-Porter Resolution in 1921.

U.S. Food Administration: The U.S. Government agency that was responsible for monitoring and administering Allied food reserves during World War I.

Western Front: The area of fighting during WWI between the Germans on the east and the Allies on the west. It was the Germans western” front.

Zimmerman Telegram: A German proposal in 1917 to the government of Mexico to make war on the United States in exchange for territory. The message was intercepted by the British, who passed it to the U.S. Ambassador in London.